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DISASTER PREPARATION FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

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Bartow, FL - Especially in emergencies, children's fears can stem from their imaginations, and adults should take their feelings seriously. Words and actions can provide reassurance to a child who feels afraid. When talking to your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable. After a disaster, children most fear that:

- They will be separated from family, and they will be left alone.
- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- The Florida Department of Health in Polk and Hardee Counties recommends assembling a disaster kit for your child, including:
 - Any medications they be taking
 - A few favorite books, crayons, and paper
 - Puzzles, a board game, a deck of cards
 - Two favorite small toys, such as a doll or action figure, or a stuffed animal
 - Favorite blanket, pillow
 - Pictures of family and pets
 - Other special items that will comfort your child
- Children's immunizations should be up-to-date to protect from vaccine-preventable diseases, including an unexpected outbreak during a disaster.
- Keep a copy of your child's complete immunization history in your disaster kit, attached to the family emergency information.
- All family members should record the date of their last tetanus-diphtheria shot in this record as well.
- Adults need to help children understand the emergency or disaster. Discussion is critical.
- Children need to know that their family is safe. It is best not to let children or adolescents repeatedly view media footage of traumatic events, and they should not view these events alone. Adolescents can be particularly hard hit by any type of disaster. Parents should watch for signs such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, lack of pleasure in usual activities, and substance abuse.



For further information, please visit floridahealth.gov or floridadisaster.org/.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](http://PublicHealthAccreditationBoard.org), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. For more information about the Florida Department of Health in Polk County follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/FLHealthPolk or visit polk.floridahealth.gov